

An Investigation of High School Students' English Language Proficiency Level and Approaches Used by Teachers in the Classes of The Two High Schools in Dagon Myothit (North)

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Abstract

This research aims at the investigation of English language proficiency level of high school students of the two selected high schools from Dagon Myothit (North), and also explore the teachers' teaching approaches. This research will be conducted; (1) to explore high school students' English language proficiency level whether they have the abilities to cope with the new curriculum of Grade - X, XI and XII, Myanmar, (2) to acquire teachers' approaches according to the new curriculum, (3) to apply the outcomes of the research in ELT in Myanmar. The high school students of Grade - X, XI and XII, more precisely about one hundred and sixty-six students from No-1, B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) and two hundred and seventeenth students from No-4, B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) were conducted as participants for their English language proficiency level test. The test will be conducted as a teacher-made test designed by the researcher and adapted to the current Standardized English Language Proficiency Tests and the new question format of Grade – XII, Myanmar. The survey questionnaires were conducted to English language teachers of Grade X, XI and XII from selected two high schools. The data were analyzed by both quantitative and qualitative methods. The results show that the high school students of both of the selected two high schools have the required proficiency skill to cope with the new curriculum of Grade X, XI and XII according to KG+12, Myanmar. It is found that most of the students from the selected two high schools are B1 and B2 learners. C1 is rare. There is no C2 students. Students from No (1) Basic Education High School, Dagon Myothit (North) have the slightly higher level above than that of No (4). In both selected high schools, female students have one higher level above than the male students in English proficiency level. So, it can be assumed that there is a slight impact of gender on the results of the proficiency level of the selected high school students. Moreover, English language teachers of the selected two high schools use the effective teaching approaches according to the new teaching methods of KG+12. The outcomes of the research are very useful in the implementation for further researchers. The detailed findings and results are described in the findings and discussion section.

Key words – English proficiency level, selected high school students, ELT teachers, approaches, ELT

Introduction

English is an international language and most of the countries use English as a second language or foreign language or a lingua franca. To be proficient in English Language, many standardized language tests are used to measure the learners' English language proficiency level. IELTS and TOEFL are well – known standardized language tests and they have become a compulsory gate way to the next level or future steps to further studies such as scholarship programs or job opportunities. English language proficiency tests are used to evaluate the participants' performance in English. Formative assessment is used especially in the language proficiency tests to conduct the students' language level and their needs without informing what is going to be measured.

Rao (2016) emphasized in her study that proficiency equates with fluency, but there is a distinction between both of them. In Myanmar, English is studied as a foreign language and English has been used as a compulsory subject for most of the specialized fields. Therefore, English language proficiency test has become the entrance to the next door for further studies. In this study, the researcher tries to investigate English language proficiency level of the high

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school students which are Grade – X, XI and XII of No (1) and (4) Basic Education High Schools of Dagon Myothit (North).

There are a lot of related researches in this field. The first one is ‘English Language Proficiency of Students in Visayas State University’ by Precious C. Domingo. In his studies, the researcher tried to measure the language proficiency of the senior high school students of Visayas State University. The researcher adopted a test from IELTS. The test determines the students’ proficiency in English language in four skills. Scores in each skill are evaluated using the method also adopted from IELTS. The results showed that students varied in their proficiency level in using the English language. The second one is ‘A Study of English Proficiency Test among the First Year University Students’ by Ignasia Yuyun, Meyling, Naftalia Laksana and Demus Abedneg. The study aims at analyzing the English skills in an English Proficiency Test (EPT) shown by the first-year university students (freshmen). This study revealed reading skill was the major problems particularly, in reviewing overall reading text. To solve this problem, the cognitive strategies, particularly the top-down reading strategies are suggested to anticipate the author’s purpose.

The aims of the research are to investigate the selected high school students’ English language proficiency level and explore the teachers’ approaches to them.

The objectives are – (1) to measure the high school students’ English language proficiency level whether they have the abilities to cope with the new curriculum of Grade X, XI and XII according to the new Myanmar teaching context or not, (2) to investigate teachers’ approaches to their students in the class according to the new curriculum of Kg+12 and, (3) to apply the outcomes of the research project in teaching learning processes in EFL Myanmar context.

- (1) What proficiency level does the selected high school students need to have to cope with the new curriculum of Grade X, XI and XII according to KG+12 in Myanmar?
- (2) How do the English language teachers of the selected two high schools teach English to their students in the classes according to the new curriculum?
- (3) In what way, the outcomes of the research project in teaching learning processes in EFL context, Myanmar?

Methodology

To check whether the target population have the necessary English language skills in a particular area or not, the proficiency test is used to measure the students’ proficiency level. In such a way, the researcher of this research tries to explore English language proficiency level of the selected high school students so that the researcher and their language teachers can see they have the required language skills according to KG+12 program.

Participants of the Study

Grade- X, XI and XII students of the selected two high schools: No (1) and (4) Basic Education High Schools, Dagon Myothit (North) and their English language teachers participated as the participants of this study. For survey questionnaires, altogether six English language teachers from the selected two high schools were participated to measure their teaching approaches according to the new curriculum of Grade -XII.

Demographic Data of the Participants (High School Students) of No (1) and (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

The demographic data of the participants of No (1) and (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) who were participated to take the English Language Proficiency Test of this research are described in Table (1) and (2).

Table (1) Demographic Data of the High Schools Students of No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

Total Numbers of Students	Gender		Age	Grade	Section
	Total Numbers of Female Students	Total Numbers of Male Students			
166	90	76	15,16,17 & 18	X. XI & XII	A, B & C

Table (2) Demographic Data of the High Schools Students of No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

Total Numbers of Students	Gender		Age	Grade	Section
	Total Numbers of Female Students	Total Numbers of Male Students			
216	114	102	15,16,17 & 18	X. XI & XII	A, B & C

Demographic Data of the Participants (English Language Teachers) of No (1) and (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

The demographic data of the participants (English Language Teachers) of No (1) and (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) who were participated in survey questionnaires are described in Table (3) and (4).

Table (3) Demographic Data of the English Language Teachers of No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

Total Numbers of English Language Teachers	Gender		Age	First Degree	Master Degree	Position	Teaching Classes
	Total Numbers of Female English Language Teachers	Total Numbers of Male English Language Teachers					
3	3	0	32 & 39	B.Ed	M.Ed	SAT	X, XI & XII

Table (4) Demographic Data of the English Language Teachers of No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

Total Numbers of English Language Teachers	Gender		Age	First Degree	Master Degree	Position	Teaching Classes
	Total Numbers of Female English Language Teachers	Total Numbers of Male English Language Teachers					
3	3	0	37, 39 & 41	B.Ed	M.Ed	SAT	X, XI & XII

The teacher-made was designed by the researcher to cope with the new curriculum of the Grade -XII question format as the material and the proficiency of the high school students was measured by CEFR (Common European Framework Reference) of CEFR levels of Council of Europe which are A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2 levels respectively. The simple

random sampling method was used to choose individuals to be sampled who would be representative of the population. High school students of Grade - X (A, B & C), Grade - XI (A & B) and Grade - XII of No (4) B.E.H.S Dagon Myothit (North) and Grade - X (A & C), Grade - XI (A & B) and Grade - XII of No (1) B.E.H.S Dagon Myothit (North) were conducted for the proficiency test. The test includes six sections which are vocabulary, grammar, reading, functional language for speaking, listening and writing sections. The total time limit is forty-five minutes. The data were being analyzed manually first and collected in the excel spread sheets and they were going to be interpreted to identify the variables. The collected data of instruments yielding numeric scores were going to be measured by CEFR levels of Council of Europe to identify the participants' proficiency level. For survey questionnaires, six English language teachers of the two selected high schools; No (1) & (4) B.E.H.S Dagon Myothit (North) were conducted to answer the survey questionnaires to conduct their teaching approaches. There are all together 50 survey questionnaires. Concept sampling of purposeful sampling was used to collect the response of English language teachers. The five Likert - skill of predetermined close- ended response categories (strongly agree to strongly disagree) was used to measure their approaches and some reflections to reflect their teaching methodology and the new curriculum they are currently using. Questionnaire surveys were being categorized by qualitative approach according to their themes through coding, segmenting and labelling text to form descriptions and broad themes in the data. After coding an entire body of survey questionnaires, all coded words were being made a list to categorize them into similar groups and they had to be checked to look for the redundant codes or dummy data. The lists of similar codes were going to be analyzed into main themes and sub – themes and they had to be developed a new theory or concept.

The following two figures show No (1) and (4) Basic Education High Schools, Dagon Myothit (North) and the classes of the proficiency tests



Fig. 1. (a & b) No (1) Basic Education High Schools, Dagon Myothit (North) and one of the classrooms for the test (c & d) No (4) Basic Education High Schools, Dagon Myothit (North) and one of the classrooms for the test

Data Analysis and Data Interpretation of the Proficiency Test

The raw data are analyzed by categorizing them into codebook. The scoring guidelines that the researchers used in this research is a rubric made by the researcher to adjust the types and items of the Teacher-made test created by the researcher and the scoring system is adopted from CEFR levels of Council of Europe. There are altogether six sections in the proficiency test; ten items for vocabulary section, ten items for grammar, five items for speaking, another five items for listening and eight items for reading and one item for writing.

The marking scheme for each item is one mark each for each objective test item for other four sections except reading and writing since vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing are objective types and they are multiple choice items and fill in the blanks and reading section has two parts, the first six items are constructed for matching and they are just the objective ones and another two items are questions related to students' critical thinking and they are two marks each. The last item is writing section and it is totally subjective type. The total score was then compared to the CEFR levels of Council of Europe. The scores for each section and the total scores to determine the level of proficiency for these skills as reflected in Tables (5).

Table (5) Marking Scheme for Each Skill of English Language Proficiency

Sr.No	Skills	Mark Range	Level
1.	Vocabulary	0	A0
		1 to 2	A1
		2 to 4	A2
		4 to 6	B1
		6 to 8	B2
		8 to 9	C1
		10 (full mark)	C2
		2.	Grammar
1 to 2	A1		
2 to 4	A2		
4 to 6	B1		
6 to 8	B2		
8 to 9	C1		
10 (full mark)	C2		
3.	Speaking		
		1	A1
		1 to 2	A2
		2 to 3	B1
		3 to 4	B2
		4 to 5	C1
		5 (full mark)	C2
		4.	Listening
1	A1		
1 to 2	A2		
2 to 3	B1		
3 to 4	B2		
4 to 5	C1		

		5 (full mark)	C2
5.	Reading	0	A0
		1 to 2	A1
		2 to 4	A2
		4 to 6	B1
		6 to 8	B2
		8 to 9	C1
		10 (full mark)	C2
6.	Writing		
	not attempt	0	A0
	inappropriate vocabulary but incorrect grammar, irrelevant	1	A1
	simple words but incorrect grammar, irrelevant	1 to 2	A2
	appropriate vocabulary, collocations, some grammatical errors but not too well organized	2 to 3	B1
	well-organized, systematical, effective use of vocabulary,	3 to 4	B2
	well-organized, enrich vocabulary, effective use of vocabulary, correct grammar, relevancy and nearly flawless	4, 5 & 6	C1
	clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts, appropriate and effective writing style, logical and well-organized structure and flawless	6, 7, 8 & 9	C2

Findings and Discussion

The results of the proficiency test of the selected two high schools of Dagon Myothit (North) are as follow.

Table (6) English Language Proficiency Levels of the High Schools Students from No (1) Basic Education High School, Dagon Myothit (North)

Level	Gender	
	Female	Male
A1	15	13
A2	25	25
B1	18	12
B2	29	25
C1	3	1
C2	0	0

The above Table (6) shows the English language proficiency level of Grade X, XI and XII students. The total number of high school students of No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) is one hundred and sixty-six. There are ninety female students and seventy-six male students. Their general age is seventeen. According to the data analysis of the results of the English Language Proficiency Levels of the High Schools Students from No (1) Basic Education High School, Dagon Myothit (North), it is shown that female students get high scores than male students in average overall scores. Very few students get C1. There is no C2 level students in Grade X, XI and XII. Both total numbers of female students and male students have got same level, A2. Except A2, female students get high marks than that of male students. Overall, it can be assumed that most of the high school students of No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) are B2 learners since both the total numbers of female and male students has got B2 in their English language proficiency test.

Table (7) English Language Proficiency Levels of the High Schools Students from No (4) Basic Education High School, Dagon Myothit (North)

Level	Gender	
	Female	Male
A1	29	25
A2	27	26
B1	31	29
B2	25	19
C1	2	3
C2	0	0

Table (7) describes the English language proficiency level of Grade X, XI and XII students. The total number of high school students of No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) is two hundred and sixteen. Their general age is seventeenth. Among them, one hundred and fourteen students are the female students and one hundred and two students are the males. The results of the English language proficiency test show that female students achieve higher level in their English proficiency than the males. None of the C2 level student is found and most of them are A1, A2, B1 and B2 levels respectively. The least one is C1. The following two bar charts show the percentage of the male and female students of No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) who got the scores in each CEFR English language level respectively.

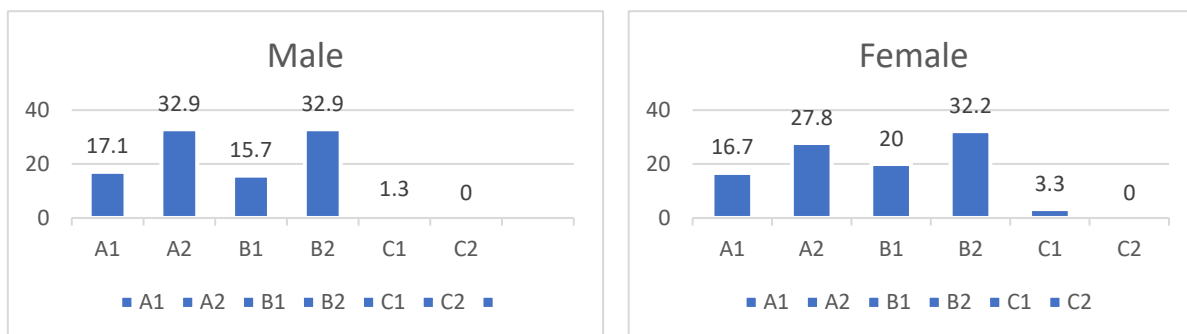


Fig. 2. English language proficiency level of male and female students from No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

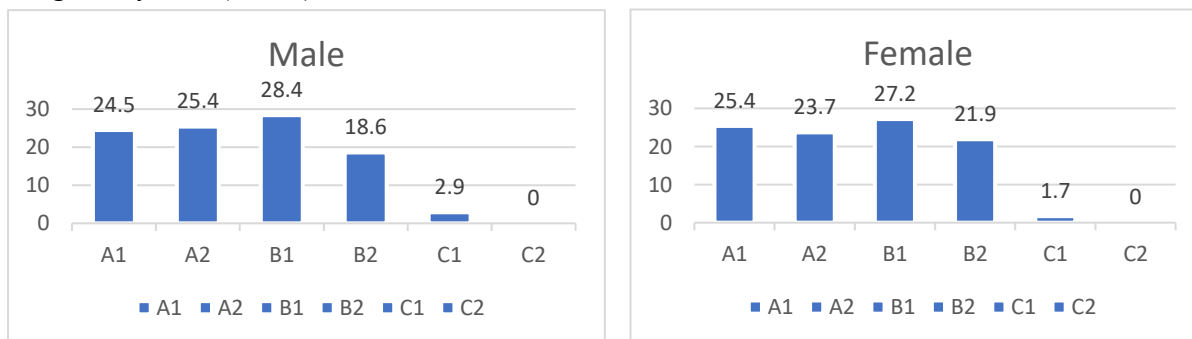


Fig. 3. English language proficiency level of male and female students from No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North)

According to (Fig. 2), the male students get A2 and B2 as the same percentage, 32.9% respectively and most of the female students are B2 learners since it is the highest percentage

of all levels. C1 is very rare. There is no C2 students from No (1) Basic Education High School and most of the male students are A2 and B2 and most of the female students are B2 learners. The least ones are C1 learners.

According to (Fig. 3), most of the male and female students from No (4) Basic Education High School are B1 learners with 28.4% and 27.2% respectively. The least ones are C1 learners. There is no C2 learners in both of the gender. In these selected high schools, the total ratio of the percentage of male and female students are nearly the same in their level of proficiency.

In contrast, the results illustrate that most of the students from No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) are the A2 and B2 learners whereas most of the students from No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) are B1 learners. Therefore, it can be assumed that the high school students of No (1) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North) have one higher level than that of No (4) B.E.H.S, Dagon Myothit (North). Female students are seemed to be more proficient than the male students in English proficiency level since the females have got one higher level than the males. Therefore, the gender seems to partially influence on the results of the proficiency level of the selected high school students.

Data Analysis and Interpretation for Survey Questionnaires of English Language Teachers

There are altogether fifty survey questionnaires and these survey questionnaires are categorized into different themes or categories. These themes are grouped into sub-themes which has similar themes. They are coded into different codes and analyzed into major themes. They are described in the tables as follow.

Since the data analysis of the survey questionnaires is used qualitative methods, the coded themes are used to categorized them. The references for the abbreviation of each coded theme are as follow. Q refers to coded sign of 'Question'.

- Q1 is questions related to curriculum – based approach
- Q2 is questions relayed to learner – centered approach
- Q3 is questions relayed to teacher – centered approach
- Q4 is questions related to checking students' proficiency level
- Q5 is questions related to the use of listening exercises to improve the students' listening skill according to the new curriculum
- Q6 is questions related to the use of speaking activities to improve the students' speaking skill according to the new curriculum
- Q7 is questions related to error correction while or after teaching
- Q8 is questions related to asking for students' feedback after each lesson to reflect the teacher's teaching style and approaches
- Q9 is questions related to following the teaching methods of the prescribed teacher guides
- Q10 is questions related to extra curricula activities to improve students' language proficiency.
- Q11 is questions related to journal writing for teachers' personal and professional development
- Q12 is questions related to using teaching approaches adjusting students' levels and needs
- Q13 is questions related to questions related to providing teachers trainings for teachers' professional development
- Q14 is questions related to teachers' positive opinions related to the new curriculum of KG+12

'T' refers to 'Teacher' and there are altogether six English language teachers in the selected two high schools. Therefore, it is coded into T1, T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6.

Table (8) Data analysis of the survey questionnaires of the six English language teachers of the selected two high schools of Dagon Myothit (North)

Themes	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	Total
Q1	-	√	√	√	√	√	5
Q2	√	√	√	√	-	-	4
Q3	-	-	-	-	√	√	2
Q4	√	√	√	√	-	√	5
Q5	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Q6	√	√	-	√	-	√	4
Q7	-	√	√	√	-	√	4
Q8	-	√	√	√	-	√	4
Q9	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Q10	√	√	√	√	√	√	6
Q11	-	√	√	-	-	-	2
Q12	√	√	√	√	-	√	5
Q13	-	√	√	√	√	√	5
Q14	√	-	√	√	-	√	4

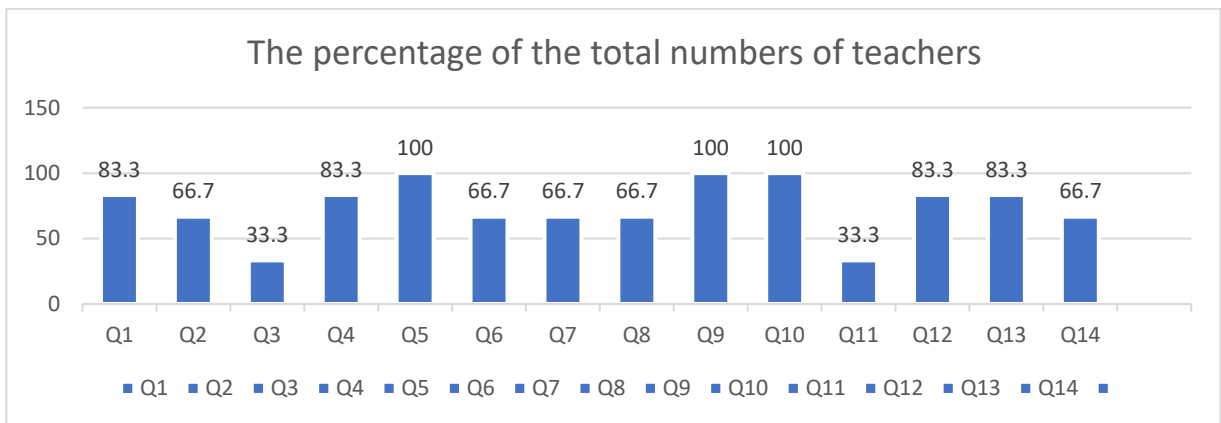


Fig. 4. The percentage of the total numbers of teachers which show the response of the survey questionnaires

According to the data analysis of the survey questionnaires of six English language teachers of selected two high schools, all the English language teachers of selected two high schools seemed to follow the teaching approaches of the prescribed ‘Teacher Guides’ effectively, they also use listening exercises very well and provide extra curricula activities for the effectiveness of students’ learning.

Next, five out of six English language teachers use curriculum – based language teaching and they also check students’ proficiency level and they adjust the students’ proficiency level and their teaching approach to have effective teaching – learning situation, they also have teacher training courses to promote their professional development.

Four out of six English language teachers prefer to use learner – centered approach, they use the speaking activities to enhance students’ learning and they also use error correction while and after teaching, they also ask for students’ feedback to check their teaching skill and approaches. Moreover, they have positive opinions related to the new curriculum of KG+12. There is no significant impact of the education background and age of English language teachers on the results of the proficiency level of the high school students.

To answer the research questions of this study, (1) it can be assumed that the high school students from both of the selected two high schools have the required proficiency skill to cope with the new curriculum of Grade X, XI and XII according to KG+12 in Myanmar.

(2) Moreover, hundred percent of English Language teachers from the selected two high schools seemed to follow the teacher guide and new approaches of the new curriculum of KG+12 effectively and they also provide some extracurricular activities for the improvement of their students' language skills. They do not skip the listening tasks of each lesson. 88.3 % of language teachers teach according to the curriculum and they also check the students' level and their needs whether they have required language skill to cope with the new teaching methods of KG+12. They have teacher training courses to upgrade their skills. 66.7 % of the language teachers use learner- centered approach, speaking activities, error correction and students' feedback to reflect their teaching and they have positive opinion concerned with new curriculum of KG+12. The least percentage is 33% and these language teachers hardly ever have the use of journal writing practice to reflect and enhance their teaching. They prefer to use learner – centered approach to teacher – centered approach but this is the most effective way of communicative language teaching according to the new teaching approaches of Myanmar.

(3) This research can give the implementation not only for the future researchers to do further researches related to language proficiency test but also for the language teachers or curriculum designers to check the students' proficiency level whether they have required skills in order to join the respective language classes or not. It is also useful to make the need analysis of the new curriculum whether it is appropriate and effective for the target population or not. Therefore, the outcomes of this research are very useful to apply in the teaching – learning processes.

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, it is assumed that most of the students from the selected two high schools are B1 and B2 learners. C1 is rare. There is no C2 students. Students from No (1) Basic Education High School, Dagon Myothit (North) have the slightly higher level above than that of No (4). In both selected high schools, female students have one higher level above than the male students in English proficiency level. So, it can be assumed that there is a slight impact of gender on the results of the proficiency level of the selected high school students. This research can give contributions for curriculum designers, practitioners and future researchers since it is useful to make the need analysis of the new curriculum whether it is appropriate and effective for the target population or not. Therefore, the outcomes of this research are very useful to apply in the teaching – learning processes.

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